

On Pragmatist and Idealist

Kit Tyabandha, Ph.D.

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There are two important qualities which together help making great men of the world. They are pragmatism and idealism. Idealism requires that a person has got an idea in which he believes to be a good cause in doing something. An idealist sticks to his ideal and his action is influenced by it. On the other hand, a pragmatist is a practical person who takes into account methods which are available at that time, as well as the constraints involved, into account. Pragmatism implies that one has got to use tricks sometimes. Idealic without pragmatic is futile, while pragmatic without idealic is stupidity. To put in another words, pragmatism alone makes a man without a heart, while idealism alone makes a man without a head.

Take for an example, the play *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare. The play depicts the returning of Julius Caesar to Rome after his victories in far lands. He was murdered by a group of conspirators which was led by Decius Brutus, but which was designed by Cassius. In this play Shakespeare has shown us three different personations, the first one represents a pragmatist, the second one an imperfect combination of the two qualities, and the third one a perfectly balanced person who has both a pragmatic and an idealic quality.

The first one is Cassius who, with his fluent words, succeed in inducing other people, including Brutus, to help murdering Caesar. He hates Caesar, and has no qualm in killing him. His character was described by Caesar himself when he speaks to Mark Antony,

I do not know the man I should avoid
So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much;
He is a great observer and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men: he loves no plays,
As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music;

Julius Caesar, Act 1 Scene 2.

Cassius is being described here as a man with knowledge, because he reads much, but who is without inner good qualities necessary to

make a man, because he neither like plays nor like music. Therefore he is a stereotype of our previous definition, that is *with head but without heart*. Caesar mentioned here Mark Antony as the opposite side of Cassius, which he is, as we shall see afterward. Here, also, Caesar seems to know beforehand that there will be trouble coming from the direction of Cassius, though he does not know how it will happen.

The next character is Brutus, who also loves Caesar, but either because he succumbs to his own jealousy in Caesar or because he is led towards [that] direction by the clever Cassius, has decided to take part in the bloody business and stabs Caesar in the back. This statement can be seen in the following lines taken from Act 1 Scene 2 of the play, where he says to Cassius.

I would not, Cassius; yet I love him well.
But wherefore do you hold me here so long?

Julius Caesar, Act 1 Scene 2.

Antony is portrayed by Shakespeare to possess a perfect harmony between the two qualities. As a leader, he is both an idealic and a pragmatic at the same time. He has much love for both Caesar and Rome. After Caesar has been killed by the conspirators Antony flees to his own house and hides there. Realising that he will be the next target of attack and knowing that the force from the other side is too great for him to resist, he sends a servant to prostrate himself before Brutus. This is what happens.

Thus, Brutus, did my master bid me kneel:
Thus did Mark Antony bid me fall down;
And, being prostrate, thus he bade me say:
Brutus is noble, wise, valiant, and honest;
Caesar was mighty, bold, royal, and loving:
Say I love Brutus, and I honour him;
Say I fear'd Caesar, honour'd him and loved him.

Julius Caesar, Act 3 Scene 1.

Then without a word of lie he joins the group of his enemy to the market-place to meet a crowd of roman citizens. At the market-place Brutus gives a speech. He tells the people of Rome that in killing Caesar he has saved Rome from ruin because Caesar was ambitious,

and that although he loves Caesar much he loves his country even more. The people believe what Brutus says. After that Brutus Antony to come upon the stage to talk to the people also. This Antony does, and he gives such a good speech that at the end of it all the romans turn against the conspirators and demand vengeance for the death of Caesar. His speech is so tactful that it conveys different meanings to two groups of people who are listening to it at the same time, that is the conspirators and the people. Antony wants to rouse the people, who by this time have already agreed with what Brutus has said, to go against him. To do this he needs to build up the emotion of the mob without letting his enemy realise what he is at, otherwise they can stop him at any time and all his effort will be in vain.

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
 I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
 The evil that men do lives after them;
 The good is oft interred with their bones;
 So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
 Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:
 If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
 And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
 Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest—
 For Brutus is an honourable man;
 So are they all, all honourable men—
 Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
 He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
 But Brutus says he was ambitious;
 And Brutus is an honourable man.
 He hath brought many captives home to Rome
 Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
 Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
 When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
 Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
 Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
 And Brutus is an honourable man.
 You all did see that on the Lupercal
 I trice presented him a kingly crown,
 Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
 Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
 And, sure, he is an honourable man.
 I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
 But here I am to speak what I do know.
 You all did love him once, not without cause:
 What cause withholds you then, to mourn for him?
 O judgement! thou art fled to brutish beasts,

And men have lost their reason. Bear with me;
 My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
 And I must pause till it come back to me.

Julius Caesar, Act 3 Scene 2.

In it he says all the time that the traitors are all honourable men. By *honourable men* it neither imply that they are men of virtue or that their deed is right or pardonable. Talking about their claim that Caesar was an ambitious man, he gives several examples of the good things which Caesar has done for Rome, for example the ransom received in exchange for captivated enemies, the love of Caesar for the people including the poor, and the rejection of the crown which was being offered to him by Antony himself at previous public gatherings. Through these carefully selected examples he has shown to the Romans that if Caesar is ambitious he is so only for the prosperity of Rome and its people. Nor that *ambition* [is] a negative quality, if it does not have anything to do with selfishness. Among its synonyms is the word *aspiration* which definitely implies a positive quality of a person. For the reason given, this speech made by Antony is much studied by students of English literature and is very well known to the rest of the English speaking people. From Figure 1 we can see how Antony managed to change the direction of the emotion of the Romans. After that he talks about a will written by Caesar, which he says he is not going to read.

But here's a parchment with the seal of Caesar;
 I found it in his closet, 'tis his will:
 Let but the commons hear this testament—
 Which, pardon me, I do not mean to read—
 And they would go and kiss dead Caesar's wounds
 And dip their napkins in his sacred blood,

Julius Caesar, Act 3 Scene 2.

He stresses that it is not his wish to read the will lest the people will mutiny against *the noble men*. The effect which is produced after that can be seen in the steep increase in emotion in Figure 1 as well as an excerpt from the following short dialogues among the citizens, which also helps us conclude that Mark Antony is portrayed in this play to be both an idealist and a pragmatist at the same time.

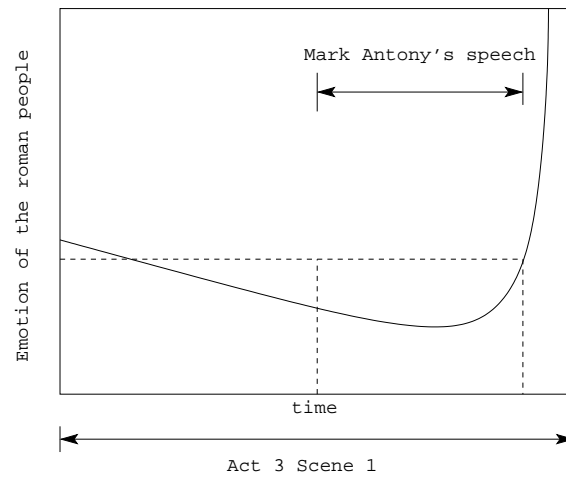


Figure 1 *The emotion of the roman people during the speech of Mark Antony*

All We'll mutiny.

First Citizen We'll burn the house of Brutus.

Third Citizen Away, then! come, seek the conspirators.

Julius Caesar, Act 3 Scene 2.